

HOLIDAY LESSONS

Special Lessons for the weeks of:
New Year's, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas



Because it can be a challenge to find leaders during holiday weeks, the *VeggieConnections* lessons for these times have been designed to work with a minimum of leaders. All children will gather at the Countertop Connections area, remaining in a large group for the *Veggie-Connection* and God Connection portions of the lesson.

Then kids can be divided into preschool and elementary groups, and allowed to rotate through the several craft and game stations. Some stations will work

for both preschool and elementary children combined, while others offer variations to adapt the activities for either preschool or elementary children.

After the kids have enjoyed craft and game stations, kids should be brought back together around the Countertop Connections area for the Kid Connection time.

Program Bible Verse:

"Come near to God and
he will come near to you."
James 4:8

New Year's Verse:

Genesis 1:1-31



Lesson for:

NEW YEAR'S

Welcome

Welcome the children with a robust: **Happy New Year!** Explain that because it is a holiday week, things are going to be a bit different today. Point out that the New Year is a time to think about new beginnings and how God created each of us just the way he wanted us. This is a time to celebrate new beginnings! Say: **Let's begin with a prayer:** Heavenly Father, our loving Creator, thank you for all of the children here today. Please be with us as we celebrate new beginnings. Thank you for the new beginning of our world that you began so many years ago. We also want to thank you for creating each one of us to be a special part of you family. Please be with us as we begin another new year. Help us to have a heart of love toward others. In your name we pray. Amen.

Veggie Connection: A Snoodle's Tale

Say: Today we're going to watch a special *VeggieTales* video that talks about how God created each one of us special. It's about an imaginary character called a Snoodle, who is feeling like he is just not good enough the way he was created. Watch and find out what happens when he runs away and meets someone that gives him a new beginning on life.

SHOW THE DVD

Locate the clip on the program DVD. (The video clip is approximately 10 minutes long)

After the video is over, ask the following questions:

- What did the little Snoodle learn from his trip to Mt. Ginchez? (*He's special, his Creator loves him, he can do great things.*)
- Who created you? (*God*)
- Did you come out of a tower like the Snoodle? (*No*)



Veggie-Connections:
Connecting
to a Powerful
Relationship
with God

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

- Bible presentation leader
- Small Group leaders to gather with kids during the main presentation and lead activities at each of the craft and game centers. (Set up duplicate centers to accommodate the number of children in attendance at your church.)

SET-UP:

- Countertop Connections gathering area
- Station tables and chairs
- Screen to show movie
- *A Snoodle's Tale* DVD clip from *Veggie-Connections* kit
- New Year's decorations: streamers, party blowers, balloons, and so on

- Did God, your Creator, give you special gifts? (Yes)
- What kinds of gifts did God give to you? (Encourage the kids to share several things they are good at with a group of two or three other kids.)

God Connection: Genesis 1:1-31

Get out your Bible and read Genesis 1:1-31. Stop as you mention each day of God's creation.

Explain that out of all the things God created, people are the most special. That's because God created people in his very own image! And yet . . . he created each person special and unique! God loves each one of us so much that he has invited every single one of us into his family and wants us to spend eternity with him. Ask: **What do we have to do to spend eternity with God?** After kids answer, point out that the gift Jesus gives us through his death and resurrection is an amazing gift! It provides each one of us with a new beginning!

Activity Connection

After the Countertop Connection you may wish to divide the kids into the same amount of activity stations you have created. Point each group to a station, allow them about 10-15 minutes at each one, and then encourage the group to rotate to the next one.

Provide the following stations (or create one or two of your own).

1. Craft: New Creations!

Cover the tables before children arrive. Then distribute a paper plate and stick of modeling clay to each child. Encourage the kids to be a creator and mold something special. Have kids share their creations with the rest of the group and offer praise to each other! Kids can take their creations home on a paper plate to keep it from falling apart.

2. Craft: Watercolor Wonders

Cover the tables before children arrive. Distribute the paper and paints and encourage kids to create a paper that represents their vision of creation—or a portion of creation they are thankful for. When kids are done, encourage them to share the pictures and describe why that part of creation was portrayed. Then set aside for drying.

3. Preschool Craft: Growing Up in God Charts

Explain to kids how everyday they are growing into the person God created them to be. Provide a paper strip to each child. Have a leader measure the height of each child and mark it on their paper charts, dating the mark. Next, help children trace their hands and their feet onto the paper strips. Then give kids markers to color and decorate their charts. Provide fun stickers to add to the charts. Say: **You can use these charts to measure how you are growing. You can see how your hands and feet are growing bigger and you are growing taller.**

4. Elementary Craft: Picture Easels

Before kids arrive, assemble materials and place on the table.

Have the children sit around the table. Say: **At the end of the movie, *A Snoodle's Tale*, the Creator placed his picture of the Snoodle on an easel to show to the Snoodle.** An easel is a special type of holder to place a picture on for display. Today we are going to make an easel and place a special picture on it.

It may help to do this project step by step together as a group. **The first thing we need to do is take two craft sticks and glue them together at the bottom, in a V shape. Press them together tightly while we all count to 30.** Have the children gently let go and lay the V down upside down with the point at the top.

GOD CONNECTIONS NEEDS:

- Bible

1. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Molding clay
- Table covers
- Paper plates

2. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Watercolor paints
- Paintbrushes
- White paper
- Table covers

3. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Mural paper cut into 6" x 4" strips
- Markers
- Pencils
- Fun stickers

4. CRAFT NEEDS:

- 6 large craft sticks per child
- Glue (liquid works best)
- 1/2 pipe cleaner per child
- Instant camera [if an instant camera is not available use: 3 x 3 inch piece of cardboard or tagboard per child, small picture of a Snoodle (to be glued onto board), crayons]

Next, tell kids to pick up the pipe cleaner and a new craft stick. Say: **Take the third craft stick and hold the top, flat side facing the glued area of the first two sticks. Carefully wind the pipe cleaner around and through the three sticks so they can stand up, similar to a tee-pee.**

Have the children stack the remaining three craft sticks and glue them together. Hold them tightly while you invite everyone to sing a short song such as *Jesus Loves Me* two times, helping the glue to set.

The children should then place two dabs of glue on the standing structure roughly two finger widths from the bottom on both flat sides of the easel. Turn the stacked sticks on their sides and press them gently into the standing frame. This will create a ledge for the picture to rest on. This time, see if kids can recite the different things that God created on each of the seven days of Creation while you wait for it to dry.

Take pictures of each child to rest on their easels. If camera use is not an option, distribute crayons or colored pencils. Ask kids to create a small picture of him or herself. Glue a small colored frame on the back and display on the easel.

4. Preschool Game: New Year's Party Relay

Divide children in to two teams with even numbers. If you have an odd number of children, ask an adult volunteer to join one of the teams. Explain to the children that it is fun to dress up to celebrate the New Year. Line the two teams up at one end of the room and place a set of clothing in front of the first person in line. Explain that this is a race to put on the entire outfit (boys with jackets, girls with dresses) over their existing clothes, and then take it off again. Then the next person in line will do the same until everyone in line has had a turn.

Explain that you will be the judge and will determine whether or not each child has put on the clothes properly. The next person in line will not be able to have their turn until the judge gives a thumbs up signal. Begin the game.

When the game is over say: **Great job everyone! But remember, what we wear on the outside is not as important as what God, our Creator, created us to be on the inside.**

5. Elementary Game: New Year's Mad Lib

"Twas the night before New Years and all through the _____ (noun) not a _____ (animal) was stirring, because they were all busy making New Year's resolutions. _____ (Famous person) was promising never to _____ (verb) again. _____ (Church leader) was promising to _____ (verb) every day in the coming year. Children everywhere were saying they would _____ (verb) _____ (adverb) everyday if only their parents would _____ (verb) the next time they visited _____ (place). Speaking of _____ (same place), did you hear that people who were born there never eat _____ (food) and that their favorite song is _____ (song)?"

Well, right in the middle of all this resolution making, guess who showed up? _____ (Veggie character) S/he came to make sure that people were making resolutions that were _____ (adjective) and _____ (adjective). S/he wanted to remind people to have a thankful heart in the coming year, so s/he named some things s/he was thankful for. For example s/he was thankful for _____ (adjective) _____ (nouns), _____ (adjective) _____ (nouns) and _____ (adjective) _____ (nouns). Hopefully, you can all think of as many things to thank God for. Happy New Year to you all. And remember God made you special and he loves you very much!



4. GAME NEEDS:

- 2 large adult-sized party dresses
- 2 large adult-sized suit jackets
- 4 adult-sized fun New Year's hats
- 4 pairs-adult sized dress-up shoes

5. Game Directions

Call out the words (i.e. noun, animal, etc.) you need to fill and write them on the blanks before reading the story. You could also copy this story and allow several groups to work by themselves, having each group read their stories for everybody.

6. Game: Uniquely Made

Tape a line down the middle of your playing area. Say: **We were all created uniquely. That means not one of us is exactly like anyone else in the world! But we have some things in common with other people, and some ways we are different. We're going to spend some time today playing a game that will help us see how we are alike and different from each other!**

For Preschool: Explain to the children how one side of the line is where they should go if they have things in common with other children. Also explain how the other side of the line is where they will gather if they are different from each other. Begin calling out simple things that preschoolers may or may not have in common with each other, such as hair or eye color, month of birthdate, different number of siblings (or only child), hobbies, favorite colors, etc. After each called characteristic, have kids talk around and notice how they are the same or different from other kids.

For Elementary: Before the game, the leader will write one thing from the elementary child's life on each index card. Examples include: a variety of favorite school subjects, sports or hobbies, being left-handed, having living great-grandparents, types of pets, traveled to world locations, etc. Also, tape a mural paper up along a wall and place markers by it.

Give a card to one child and have him or her go around the room and find a person who the card describes. If the person also fits the description, he or she will continue to find other kids to form a group. Otherwise, the person will give the card to the first person he or she finds that fits the card's description, and rejoins the larger group. Once everyone who has that card's characteristic join together, they will go over to the mural, write the characteristic on the mural, and write their names. Continue playing with the remaining cards. Once all the cards are used and the mural is filled, have kids talk about both the uniqueness and commonalities between themselves. Bonus points for more than two names. Everyone has to have name on mural at least one time for game to end.

Kid Connection

Gather the children back together in one group. Sing the song, *You Are the One!* found on the *VeggieConnections Music CD*. Distribute party blowers and cheer for God! Point out that God truly is the one that allows us to begin each new year with a new beginning. All we have to do is put our trust in the Lord and ask Jesus into our hearts anew.

Go over the THINK-LINK-ACT motions with the kids and then challenge each one of them to:

THINK: Think about how God made you special.

LINK: Link your special gifts with ways you can serve others.

ACT: Name three ways you will use your gifts to spread God's love this year!

Prayer Connection

Gracious Creator, loving God, I am so thankful that you are my Creator. You made me and you don't make mistakes! Help me to make good choices in the new year to make you proud of your creation. Thank you for this new year, and for giving us new beginnings. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dismiss the children as parents arrive.

6. GAME NEEDS:

- Masking/painter's tape
- Index cards
- Mural paper
- Markers



KID CONNECTION NEEDS:

- *VeggieConnections Music CD*
- CD player
- Bible

Program Bible Verse:

"Come near to God and
he will come near to you."
James 4:8

Easter Verse:

Luke 23 - 24:12



Lesson for:

EASTER

Welcome

Welcome the children with a robust: **Happy Easter!** Explain that because it is a holiday week, things are going to be a bit different today. Take some time to explain that Easter is a time to think about Jesus and what he has done for us. Because of his sacrifice, we have eternal life with God! This is a day for celebration and fun! You may want to share the day's schedule with them: video, activities, song, prayer, and dismissal. Say: **Let's begin today with a prayer. Heavenly Father, we are so thankful for your Son Jesus, and the sacrifice that he made for us. We are so blessed that he has forgiven our sins and taken our punishment so that we can have the gift of eternal life! In your holy name we pray, amen.**

Veggie Connection: An Easter Carol

Introduce the video clip by saying: **Let's watch a Veggie video clip where one of the Veggies is finally starting to learn the real meaning of Easter.**

SHOW THE DVD

Locate the clip on the program DVD. (The video clip is approximately 10 minutes long).

After the video is over, ask the following questions:

- Is the most important thing about Easter dying fancy eggs? (*No!*)
- What is the most important thing about Easter? (*Jesus' sacrifice for us.*)
- What does Jesus' sacrifice mean to us? (*Jesus took the punishment for our sins so that we might be forgiven and have life forever with God.*)
- How do you think Mr. Nezzer felt when he learned the real reason for Easter? (*Happy, relieved, regretful, hopeful, thankful, etc.*)



Veggie-

Connections:

Connecting
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VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

- Bible presentation leader
- Small Group leaders to gather with kids during the main presentation and lead activities at each of the craft and game centers. (Set up duplicate centers to accommodate the number of children in attendance at your church.)

SET-UP:

- Countertop Connections gathering area
- Station tables and chairs
- Screen to show movie
- *An Easter Carol* DVD clip from *Veggie-Connections* kit
- Easter decorations: colorful streamers, balloons, eggs, baskets, chicks, bunnies

God Connection: Luke 23 - 24:12

Before kids arrive, summarize and break down the Bible story into different parts. Type each part out and place into a plastic Easter egg. Ask for a volunteer to come up, take an egg out of the basket, and read his or her story part to the entire group. Then tell the crowd to help the story tellers to line up in the appropriate order so that the story reads the correct way.

Praise the kids for their efforts. Then remind the kids that the gift of Jesus is for every one of us, and that Jesus died for all of us, too. That's because God knew we would make mistakes. But he loves us so much, that he didn't want our connection with him to end when we sinned. So Jesus took the punishment for us, so that we could once again connect to God and have eternal life with him forever!

Activity Connection

If you have a small group of children, you may wish to let the kids simply roam about the room, choosing the activity centers he or she would like to participate in. If your group is large, you may wish to divide the kids into the same number of groups as you have activity stations. Point each group to a station, allow them about 10-15 minutes at each one, and then encourage the group to rotate to the next one.

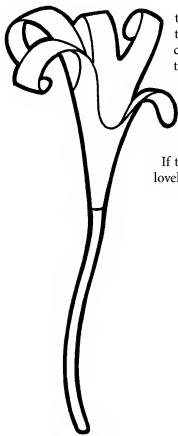
Provide the following stations (or create one or two of your own)

1. Craft: Easter Lilies

Have children sit around the table. Say: **Easter is a wonderful time of celebration of our new life in Christ. It is fun to decorate our homes and churches with brightly colored flowers to remind us of the joy that Easter brings to us. The project that we are going to make is a lovely lily flower.**

Let each child choose a bright colored piece of construction paper. Have them trace their hand on the paper and then cut it out. Discard all scraps. Take the paper hand and curl each of the fingers around a pencil. Form a cone with the palm of the hand, curled fingers facing out. Glue or tape it together. This forms the body of the lily. Staple the base of the flower to a green chenille wire stem. Trace and cut leaves out of the green construction paper. Attach to stem with tape or staples.

Have the children write their names on their flowers. If time allows, the children can do more than one, creating a lovely bouquet.

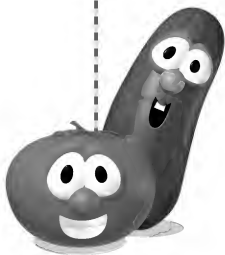


GOD CONNECTION NEEDS:

- Bible story parts typed out and cut apart
- Plastic Easter eggs

1. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Brightly colored pieces of construction paper, one per child
- Green construction paper
- Pencils, one per child
- Scissors
- Green chenille wire stems
- Glue/tape
- Stapler

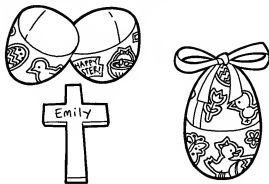


2. Craft: Hope's Egg

Have the children sit around the table. Say: **In the video, Hope emerged from a beautiful egg. While pretty Easter eggs are not the true meaning of Easter, they are a wonderful reminder of the hope that Easter brings to us all. Today we are going to make an egg that will be a constant reminder that Easter is full of hope. This might be a fun decoration to have hanging up all year long!**

For Preschool: Before the activity, cut the crosses out of the craft foam for each child. Give each child a plastic egg. Have them open the eggs and decorate each half with stickers, helping kids to not place the stickers over the seam of the egg halves. Write, "Jesus loves (name)," on each cross, using thin-tipped permanent markers. Have each child place his or her cross inside the egg and say, **These crosses remind us how much Jesus loves each one of you! Take these Easter eggs home and remember to look inside and see your name inside.**

For Elementary: Help kids cut crosses out of the craft foam. Have kids write, "Jesus loves (name)," on the crosses. Say, **Jesus loves each one of you. He died on a cross to show us His love. These Easter eggs can remind us how God raised Jesus to life nearly 2000 years ago.** Give kids eggs and have them open them. Have kids tape two strips of narrow ribbon to the inside of the top half of the egg (one on each side). Then have kids close their eggs (with the ribbon outside of the egg) and bring the ribbon together and tie a bow knot at the top of the egg (see illustration). Provide stickers and allow kids to decorate their eggs, helping kids to keep the stickers away from the egg half seams.



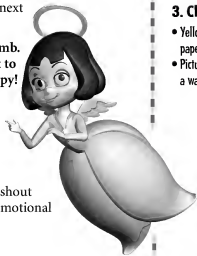
3. Game: Spread the Easter Joy Relay!

Before kids arrive, cut yellow circles out of yellow construction paper, and draw happy faces on them. You'll need one per child. Place the stack of faces next to cross picture.

Say: **On Easter morning, some women who loved Jesus went to the tomb. They were sad because Jesus had died on the cross. But when they got to the tomb, an angel told them Jesus was alive! The women were so happy!** Divide children into two equal teams and have them line up opposite from the picture of the cross. Explain how kids will walk to the tomb. When they get to the cross, they pick up a happy face and shout out, "Jesus is alive!" Then the next player will do the same, and so on.

For Elementary: Write on the back of the smiling face: whisper, giggle, shout or another form of playful communication and have the child act out emotional responses without saying words.

Option: Provide two megaphones and allow children to display their joy with more enthusiasm.



2. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Medium sized Styrofoam eggs, one per child
- Craft foam
- Scissors
- Easter stickers
- Narrow ribbons
- Thin-tipped permanent markers
- Tape

OPTIONAL:

All sequins can also be glued on if you do not want to use the pins.

3. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Yellow construction paper
- Picture of cross taped to a wall

4. Game: Table Tennis Spell-it-Out

Before kids arrive, write out the letters to spell the phrase H-E I-S R-I-S-E-N! on the table tennis balls, one letter per ball, using a permanent marker. Mix up the ten balls and place in a basket. You will have two baskets, each containing ten balls that will ultimately spell "He is risen!"

Form the kids into two teams and line them up in straight lines, shoulder to shoulder, about two feet away from each other. Hold up the baskets and tell the kids that each basket contains ten balls with letters that spell an Easter phrase on them when they are put together in the right order. Put the baskets on the floor at one end of the line. Place each of the remaining empty baskets on the floor at the other end of the line. Pass out one spoon to each child.

Explain that the person closest to the basket with the balls will reach down and grab a ball. They will then place it on their spoon and pass it to the spoon of the next person in line. The ball will then be passed all the way down the line where the last person will place it in the basket. When the ball is placed in the basket, that person runs to the beginning of the line to get the next ball started. This continues until all balls are passed down.

When all of the balls have passed, the team can get out of their line and form a huddle to arrange their lettered balls into the correct phrase, "He is risen!" You may want to give them the clue that the phrase consists of three words. Have an older helper play on the teams if you are playing with younger students or put out the correct letters for them to simply match their letters.

Kid Connection

Gather the group back together and sing the song, *God Connection* song on the *VeggieConnections Music CD*. Then say the THINK—LINK—ACT phrase together with the motions. When you are done, tell the kids that you want to help them to connect THINK—LINK—ACT to the Easter lesson:

THINK: Think about the sins that have broken your connection with God.

LINK: Link Jesus' death and resurrection to your sins and remember that you are forgiven! Your connection has been restored and you can begin anew.

ACT: Act on this new beginning by learning from your mistakes and going forward in love!

Let's pray: Amazing God, you love me so much that you let your Son die on the cross so that I might have eternal life. Please forgive my sins and know how much I appreciate all that you have done for me. I am so grateful that Jesus has risen from the tomb! In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dismiss the children as parents arrive.



4. GAME NEEDS:

- Twenty table tennis balls
- Permanent marker
- Four baskets
- Plastic spoons, one per child

KID CONNECTION NEEDS:

- *VeggieConnections Music CD*
- CD player
- Bible

Program Bible Verse:

"Come near to God and
he will come near to you."
James 4:8

Thanksgiving Verse:

Mark 12:41-44



Lesson for:

THANKSGIVING

Welcome

Greet the kids with: **Happy Thanksgiving!** Point out that Thanksgiving is a time for celebration and thankfulness. Say: **Let's begin today with a prayer.** Dear God, I am thankful to have a relationship with you. Please help me to be thankful for all of the things that I have. I want to have a happy heart Lord. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Veggie Connection: Madame Blueberry Learns to be Thankful

Say: Today we're going to watch a special *VeggieTales* video that talks about the importance of being thankful. One of the Veggies forgets all about that and gets caught up in wanting all sorts of stuff! Let's watch and find out what happens when she visits a Stuff Mart and fills her cart with way too much!

SHOW THE DVD

Locate the clip on the program DVD. (The video clip is approximately 10 minutes).

After the video is over, ask the following questions:

- How did Madame Blueberry feel at the beginning of the movie clip? (*Unhappy, sad, greedy*)
- What kind of a heart does Madame Blueberry decide that she wants? (*A happy heart*)
- Are there times when you are upset that you don't have enough stuff? What happens when you feel that way?
- Even though "stuff" is fun to have around, what do you think that we need to have a happy heart? (*Jesus*)



Veggie-Connections:
Connecting to a Powerful Relationship with God

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

- Bible presentation leader
- *VeggieConnections* *Shepherds* to gather with kids during the main presentation and lead activities at each of the craft and game centers. (Set up duplicate centers to accommodate the number of children in attendance at your church.)

SET-UP:

- Countertop Connections gathering area
- Station tables and chairs
- Screen to show movie
- *Madame Blueberry DVD* clip from *VeggieConnections* kit
- Thanksgiving decorations: pilgrims, Native Americans, cornucopias, and so on.

God Connection: Mark 12:41-44

Give each child one penny. Tell the kids to imagine that this penny is worth much more than just one cent. This penny can buy an entire grocery basket of food! Or, this penny can buy two winter coats, a pair of jeans, and a sweatshirt. Or, this penny can buy an entire trip to Disney World for the entire family. Or, this penny can buy a brand new video game system and ten new games for it. Or, this penny can pay an entire month's rent for your house. Now ask the kids:

- What would you do if your best friend came up to you and said he or she was out of money. He really needs a loan. If he doesn't pay back some money he borrowed from someone, he is going to get beat up. You know he means it, so what would you do?
- What if your grandmother got sick and needed the money for a very special medicine that can only be gotten from a foreign country and it isn't covered by insurance. What would you do?
- What if your church came to you and said they needed the money to hire a new education director so that the kids can learn about God. What would you do?
- What if a stranger came up to you and said he was cold and hungry and had no place to live. He needs your money in order to survive. What would you do?

Get out your Bible and read Mark 12:41-44. Say: **The woman in this story had only one coin, just like you, and she gave all she had to the Lord. I'm going to pass the offering basket. What will you do with your penny? Pass the basket. What will you do with the pennies you have saved up at home? You don't have to answer out loud. Take a moment and say a prayer to God. Tell him what you'll do with those pennies and why.**

Activity Connection

If you have a small group of children, you may wish to let the kids simply roam about the room, choosing the activity centers he or she would like to participate in. If your group is large, you may wish to divide the kids into the same number of groups as you have activity stations. Point each group to a station, allow them about 10-15 minutes at each one, and then encourage the group to rotate to the next one.

Provide the following stations (or create one or two of your own).

1. Craft: Kid's Cornucopias

Have children sit around table. Say: **Thanksgiving is a holiday when we celebrate our country's relationship with Native Americans. It is also a great time to celebrate our personal relationships with God. A common symbol of Thanksgiving is a horn filled with food, called a cornucopia.** Explain that a cornucopia is a cone-shaped basket that often holds fruit and is used as a decoration for Thanksgiving.

Tell each child that they will each get their own cornucopia basket and pass out the ice cream cones. Instruct the kids to carefully write their name on the cones with the icing, beginning at the open side of the cone and writing towards the point. Have leaders or older kids help the younger ones with this step.

After the children have written their names, allow them to fill their cornucopias with fruit snacks/candies. Place in baggies and write names on them with the permanent markers. Explain that when they get home, they can gently lay their cornucopias on a table with the fruit spilling out, making a nice centerpiece.



GOD CONNECTION NEEDS:

- Pennies (one per child)
- Offering basket or tray

1. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Sugar/waffle ice cream cones
- 3-4 frostings in a tube to write with
- Fruit-shaped fruit snacks or candies
- (check with parents about food allergies)
- Large baggies to take project home in
- Permanent marker

2. Craft: Quirky Turkey

Before you begin:

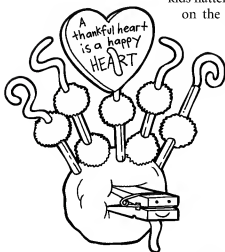
Cut drinking straws into one inch lengths and place in a bowl. Place a hand-sized ball of clay in baggies, one for each child. Punch a hole in the center of the foam hearts.

Have children sit around the table. Say: **At Thanksgiving time, it is a tradition for many people to decorate with turkeys. Today, we are going to make a super silly Quirky Turkey!** Pass out straws, beads, chenille wire stems, foam hearts, and fine-tipped markers to the kids. Show them how to string the beads and straw pieces onto the wire stems. To keep the beads/straws from falling off, twist one end of each stem into a squiggly shape. This will hold the pieces on to the stem. Have the kids make several stems and explain that these will be the turkey feathers. Instruct the kids to write "A thankful heart is a happy heart" on the foam hearts. On one of the stems, have the children place the foam heart near the squiggle as they bead the other beads/straws around it.

Pass out one clothespin to each child, red construction paper, clear tape, and scissors. Explain that this will be the head of the turkey. Have the kids draw a face on the pinching end of the clothespin. Have the children cut out a red piece of construction paper to hang underneath the "neck" of the turkey and tape it in place.

Give each child a baggie with the ball of clay. This will be the turkey body. Have the kids flatten out the bottom of the ball so that the turkey can lay on the work surface. The children should then insert the undecorated side of the clothespin head into one side of the ball and the chenille stem feathers into the other side. Place the "feather" with the heart near the center of the group of "feathers".

Enjoy these Quirky Turkeys as you celebrate this Thanksgiving season!



3. Craft: Thankful Catalog

Have the children sit around the table. Say: **Madame Blueberry looked through a lot of catalogues to find things that she wanted. She later realized that she needed to be thankful for what she already had. You're going to make your own Thankful Catalog today!**

Have kids cut out pictures from magazines of things that they already have. (*food, house, mom, dad, pet, and so on*)

For Preschool: Have the kids begin to glue down their magazine pictures onto the posterboard. Encourage the children to hang their catalog collages in their rooms as a reminder of how God provides everything they need.

For Elementary: At the top of the papers, the kids need to write "I am thankful for." Then have the children glue down one picture on each page. After they glue down the picture have them write "because" underneath and then fill in why they are thankful for that picture. When several pages have been completed, the kids can make a cover page entitled "Thankful Catalog." Staple all pages together.



2. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Modeling/homemade clay or dough
- Clear plastic baggies
- Chenille wire stems
- Solid colored drinking straws cut into one inch lengths, 5 straws per child
- Pom pom beads
- 2 inch foam hearts with a hole punched in the center, one per child
- Hole punch
- Wooden clothespins, one per child
- Red paper
- Scissors
- Clear tape
- Fine-tipped markers

3. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Child friendly magazines
- Scissors
- Glue
- Colored sheets of paper
- Stapler
- Crayons/markers
- 9" x12" Posterboard (1 per child)

OPTION:

You may want to write "I am thankful for" at the top of a blank sheet and photocopy the papers for younger kids.

4. Game: Candy Craze

Have each child write their name on a plate. Place the bowl of candies on one side of the room and have the children stand with their plates on the other. Make sure there are no obstacles in between the two. Tell the kids that when you ring the bell/blow the whistle, they will race carefully to the bowl of candy and take *one piece*. They will then race carefully back to their plate and put it on the plate. The kids need to keep this up until they hear the bell/whistle again at which point, they must freeze.

If they are not touching their plate when they hear the second bell/whistle, they will have to give back all of the candy on their plate. If they are touching their plate, they get to keep their candy. Give the children a lot of time to gather the candy, the longer they have, the more they will understand the lesson of the game. Every child that is not touching their plate at the end **MUST** give back every single piece of their candy.

Some of you got to keep all of your candy, while others had to give it back. Life sure doesn't seem fair when other people have more than we do. God wants us to be content with what we do have and he wants us to be excited about our relationship with him! It is important to God that we trust him, and not put our faith in the things that we have to make us happy. Pass out the rest of the candy to the kids who lost theirs initially.

5. Game: Turkey Pen

Say: It is fun to act like animals, and today we are all going to be turkeys! Have the kids line up in a straight line on the right side of the yarn line. That side is called "In the pen" and the left side is called "Out of the pen." When you call out: **In the pen**, the kids must jump to the right side of the yarn line. When you call out: **Out of the pen**, the kids must jump to the left side of the yarn line. If the children don't jump or jump in the wrong direction, they are out of the game. It may be fun for the leader to yell one direction while pointing in another. You can play this game as many times as the schedule will allow.

As an alternative way of playing, call out categories "girls in, boys out" or "white shoes in, black shoes out" or "third graders in, kindergartners out."

Kid Connection

Gather the children back together in one group. Sing the *Thankfulness Song* from the *VeggieConnections Music CD*. Then say the THINK—LINK—ACT phrase together with the motions. Then say: God doesn't want us to wait until Thanksgiving to be thankful each year. God wants us to be thankful for all the gifts he has given us every day of the year! We can do that in many ways, by giving what we have to God and others. We can do that with our money, with our actions, and with our words. Let's connect our THINK—LINK—ACT phrase to what we learned today:

THINK: Think about all the things you are thankful for.

LINK: Link your feelings of thankfulness to God and remember that God wants us to show our thankfulness to him every day.

ACT: Act on ways to show your thankfulness with your money, your words, and your actions. How will you do that in the upcoming weeks ahead?

Let's pray: It is hard to remember to be thankful Lord. I am thankful for the shelter that keeps me safe, for food that nourishes me, and for friends that care about me. I am also very thankful that you made me and you love me. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dismiss the children as parents arrive.

4. GAME NEEDS:

- Large bowl of small candies, or individually wrapped candies
- One paper plate per child
- Markers
- Hand wipes
- Bell/whistle

5. GAME NEEDS:

- A long piece of yarn



KID CONNECTION NEEDS:

- VeggieConnections Music CD
- CD player

Program Bible Verse:

"Come near to God and
he will come near to you."
James 4:8

Christmas Verse:

Luke 2:1-20



Lesson for:

CHRISTMAS

Welcome

Welcome the children with a heart-felt Merry Christmas! Say: Let's begin today with a prayer. Dear God, thank you so much for the birth of your son, Jesus. Thank you for my family and my teachers. Amen.

Veggie Connection: *The Toy That Saved Christmas*

Say: Sometimes it's hard at Christmas time with all the toys, parties, and vacations to remember the real Christmas story. Today we're going to watch a short story that reminds us of the real Christmas message.

SHOW THE DVD

Locate the clip on the program DVD. (The video clip is approximately 10 minutes)

After the video is over, ask the following questions:

- Why did Mr. Nezzar want to sell so many Buzz-Saw Louie dolls? (*Because all he cared about was getting more money at Christmas time.*)
- Why did the Veggies want to save Christmas? (*They realized that God's son, Jesus was much more important than just getting toys at Christmas time.*)
- What do you do at Christmas time to take time out to celebrate the birth of Jesus? (*Let kids respond*)



Veggie-

Connections:

Connecting
to a Powerful
Relationship
with God

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

- Bible presentation leader
- Small Group leaders to gather with kids during the main presentation and lead activities at each of the craft and game centers. (Set up duplicate centers to accommodate the number of children in attendance at your church.)

SET-UP:

- Countertop Connections gathering area
- Station tables and chairs
- Screen to show movie
- *The Toy That Saved Christmas* DVD clip from VeggieConnections kit
- Christmas decorations: tree, ornaments, garland, lights, and so on

God Connection: Luke 2:1-20

Tell the kids you want to share the Christmas story with them. Then read from your Bible Luke 2:1-20. Then ask the following yes or no questions, allowing the children to respond:

- Caesar said that a census was going to be taken? (Yes)
- So Joseph and Mary went to Nazareth for the census? (No, they went to Bethlehem.)
- Mary and Joseph were going to have a baby? (Yes)
- When they arrived in Bethlehem they had to stay at an inn? (Yes)
- Mary placed the baby Jesus in a crib? (No, she placed him in a manger.)
- Angels visited nearby shepherds and said, "I bring you good news!" – (Yes)
- The angels went back to tending their flock? (No, they went to see the baby Jesus.)

Then say, **God gave the gift of his son to us because he loves us so much! A true gift of love is just that—a gift that is given from the heart; a gift that is given without anything expected in return. That's what Christmas is all about!**

Activity Connection

If your group is large, you may wish to divide the kids into the same amount of activity stations you have created. Point each group to a station, allow them about 10-15 minutes at each one, and then encourage the group to rotate to the next one.

Provide the following stations (or create one or two of your own!)



1. Craft: Crèche Ornaments

Have the children glue the craft sticks so they are in the shape of a triangle. The wood star goes at the top of the triangle and the raffia hay is glued to the opposite stick. The peanut is glued on the top of the hay representing Jesus. Assist the children in attaching the twine to form a loop to hang their ornament. Use the thin-tipped markers to write, "Christmas (date)" and each child's name on the two upright sticks of the triangle. Discuss with the children who might enjoy receiving this ornament as a gift. Discuss the best gifts they remember receiving and then discuss the greatest gift God ever sent us, his Son Jesus!

2. Craft: The Star of Jesus Cookie Creations

At birthday parties, it's fun to have a special treat! Today we are going to decorate some cookies as we celebrate Jesus' birthday. Pass out decorating items and cookies and encourage kids to decorate their cookies with either a Christmas or a birthday theme (*evergreen trees, stars, candles, baby Jesus, confetti, streamers, balloons, and so on*). Place in plastic bags, labeled with the children's names to take them home.



GOD CONNECTION NEEDS:

- Bible

1. CRAFT NEEDS:

- 3 small craft sticks per child
- Peanuts in the shell
- Raffia (hay colored)
- 1/2 inch wood or paper stars (one per child)
- Gold twine
- Craft glue
- Thin-tipped markers

2. CRAFT NEEDS:

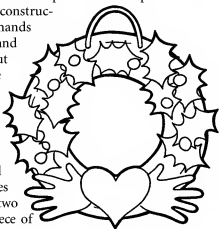
- Pre-made star cookies
- Various cookie decorating items
- Plastic bags

3. Craft: Handprint Wreaths

Have the children sit around the table. It is great fun to decorate our homes for the holiday season. We do this to give special meaning to Christmas and Jesus' birthday. At this table we are making special wreaths that will remind us that God made each of us very special. We are a one of a kind creation!

For Preschool: Prepare the paper plates by cutting a circle out of the center of plate. You want to leave about 3" width all around the plate. Help children trace their hands on to the bottom part of the plate, with their fingers pointing out both directions, forming a bow shape (see illustration). Help kids cut out heart shapes out of red construction paper and glue the heart over the center part of the hands, forming the center of the bow. Then have kids decorate the rest of their wreaths with the red and green markers. Finally, punch two holes near the top of the plate edges, and tie a piece of yarn to the holes, forming a hanging loop.

For Elementary: Give kids a paper plate, scissors and a coffee can lid. Show kids how to trace a circle with the coffee lid pattern in the center of their plates. Then help kids carefully cut a circle out of their plates. Then give kids red construction paper and have them trace around both of their hands onto the paper. Have kids carefully cut out their hand prints. For younger children, they may simply cut loosely around the shape of their hands. Then have kids cut out a red heart. Have kids glue their paper hands, fingers pointing out, at the bottom of the wreath, forming a bow shape (see illustration). Then let kids glue the heart in the middle of their two hands, forming the center of the bow. Allow kids to decorate the remainder of the wreath using green and red construction paper, cut into leaves and berries shapes, and glued to the wreath. Help kids punch two holes near the top edges of their plates, and tie a piece of yarn, forming a hanging loop.



4. Game: Pin the Star on the Tree

Have each child write their name on a star. Hang the evergreen tree on the wall and tell the kids that they are going to be blindfolded, turned around three times, and then they will walk to the wall and try to hang the star on the top of the tree. Place a loop of tape on the back of each star and begin. Reward the child who got the closest with a small prize and then say: **At Jesus' birthday party, we are all winners! Everyone gets a prize!** Distribute prizes to each child.

For Elementary: Adjust the placement of the tree for elementary kids. To add more of a challenge, use the watch to time each child. Also, provide a marker to blindfolded players. After they stick their star to the tree, players should remove their blindfold and write a way Jesus' birth is special to them, on the tree. Each child needs to choose a new response. Have a VeggieConnection Shepherd approve players' responses, before having them running back to the starting line and tagging the next player.

5. Game: Stocking Stuffer Recall

Fill the stocking up with the items. Have the kids sit in a circle around the tray with the filled stockings on top. When the leader gives the signal, one child should empty the contents of the stocking onto the tray. You then give them just about one minute to look at the items without touching them. After a minute, remove the trays or cover them with a cloth and pass out the papers and pencils. See how many the kids can name. For younger children, simply have them call out what they remember and give them clues until they name them all.

3. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Large paper plates (1 per child)
- Red construction paper
- Green construction paper
- Red and green washable markers
- Safety scissors
- Coffee can lid or similar (for tracing circle pattern on plates)
- Glue sticks
- Hole punch
- Pencils
- Yarn
- Hand wipes

4. CRAFT NEEDS:

- Large paper evergreen tree
- Pencils
- Gold paper star, one per child
- Tape
- Blindfold
- Small prizes, one per child
- Stopwatch or watch with second hand
- Markers

5. GAME NEEDS:

- Tray for each group of 20 children
- Christmas Stocking filled with 15-20 Christmas items (You may include all Christian items or a mix, for example sheep, star, manger pieces, candle, Christmas carol booklet, toy donkey, a piece of "swaddling" cloth)
- A small, wrapped package with heart with Jesus' name written on it
- Papers and pencils for older kids

At the end of the game, say **We're so glad to celebrate Christmas with all of you. This "remembering" game can help us show how well you remember the story of Jesus' birthday.** Allow the children to choose an item from the tray and tell why it is a part of the Christmas story. Select one child from each group to open the small package. **Who do you think this present is for? (allow responses)** John 3:16 says "God so loved the world that he sent his one and only Son." The best present of all to remember at Christmas time is Jesus. Perhaps you can think of a way to share Jesus' love with someone else as a way of thanking God for his wonderful gift.

6. Game: Storytelling

Say: **In *The Toy That Saved Christmas*, Annie's grandpa told her the story of Dinkletown and the true meaning of Christmas.**

For Preschool: Have kids sit in a circle and have them tell what they remember from the *VeggieTales* story. Guide kids to retell the story, making sure kids understand the true meaning of Christmas that is revealed in the story. Then have older kids share special Christmas stories they remember.

For Elementary: Explain to the kids that they are going to sit in a circle and take turns creating an original story together about the true meaning of Christmas. The leader will begin by saying a sentence like "Once upon a time, there was a child who really wanted a stuffed penguin for Christmas." Then have the kids go around the circle, adding a sentence with each turn to create their own story. Guide the children to make their story about the true meaning of Christmas. If necessary, the leader can occasionally interject a sentence to keep things on track.



Kid Connection

Gather the group back together and sing the songs, *Happy Birthday to Jesus* and *Down in My Heart* on the *VeggieConnections Music CD*. **In the excitement of the Christmastime, remember every day that the true meaning of Christmas has nothing to do with toys or food. It's all about God's son being born for us because God loves us so very much. Open your Bible to John 3:16 and read the verse "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son."**

Then say the THINK—LINK—ACT phrase together with the motions. When you are done, tell the kids that you want to help them to connect THINK—LINK—ACT to the Christmas lesson:

THINK: Think about how much God loves you.

LINK: Link God's love to the gift he sent to all of us on Christmas day—Jesus Christ!

ACT: Act on this gift by accepting Jesus into your heart and by connecting to your relationship with God and his Son, Jesus, everyday!

Let's pray: Father God, it's fun to get and give presents at Christmas! Christmas is a wonderful time to share the gift of your love with my family and friends. Thank you for the gift of your Son. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Dismiss the children as parents arrive.



KID CONNECTION NEEDS:

- *VeggieConnections Music CD*
- CD player
- Bible